



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

954

T. 1144  
ath

UC-NRLF



QB 111 292





14  
1072

76





**THE**  
**ATHENIAN CAPTIVE.**





THE  
ATHENIAN CAPTIVE.

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

THOMAS NOON TALFOURD,

AUTHOR OF "ION," &c.

---

FIRST ACTED AT COVENT GARDEN THEATRE, APRIL 28, 1838.

---

LONDON:  
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

MDCCCXXXVIII.

BRADBURY AND EVANS,  
PRINTERS-EXTRAORDINARY TO THE QUEEN,  
WHITEFRIARS.

954  
T144  
ath

TO  
THE RIGHT HON. THOMAS LORD DENMAN,  
LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF HER MAJESTY'S COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH,  
IN TESTIMONY OF DEEP ADMIRATION  
OF THOSE QUALITIES WHICH WERE THE GRACE AND DELIGHT  
OF THE BAR,  
AND WHICH HAPPILY ADORN THE BENCH;  
AND IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY CHEERING KINDNESSES;

*This Tragedy*  
IS, WITH HIS PERMISSION,  
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,  
BY  
THE AUTHOR.

M588861



## P R E F A C E.

---

THE existence of the following scenes is entirely to be attributed to the earnest desire which I felt, to assist, even in the slightest degree, the endeavour which Mr. Macready has made this season in the cause of the acted Drama: More than contented with the unhoped for association I had obtained with the living influences of scenic representation, in the indulgence accorded to "Ion," I should have postponed all thought of again venturing before the public, until years had brought leisure, which might enable me to supply, by labour and by care, what I knew to be wanting in the higher requisites of tragic style. But I could not perceive a gentleman, whose friendship I had long enjoyed; forsaking the certain rewards of his art, and the tranquil pleasures of domestic life, to engage in the chivalrous

endeavour to support a cause, which I believe to be that of humanity and of goodness, and which seemed almost desperate, without a feverish anxiety to render him assistance, and perhaps a tendency to mistake the will for the power. The position of the two great theatres—with a legal monopoly, which has been frittered away piecemeal without recompense, until nothing remains but the debts which were contracted on the faith of its continuance, and the odium of its name;—opposed to a competition with numerous establishments, dividing the dramatic talent and dissipating the dramatic interest of the town,—rendered the determination of Mr. Macready to risk his property, his time, and his energies in the management of one of them, a subject of an interest almost painful. Impressed with this sentiment, at a time when it was unforeseen that one of the most distinguished of our authors would lend his aid—when no tragic creation of Knowles “cast its shadow before,” with its assurance of power and of beauty,—when the noble revivals of Lear and of Coriolanus were only to be guessed at from those of Hamlet and Macbeth,—I determined to make an attempt, marked, I fear, with more zeal than

wisdom. Having submitted the outline of this Drama to the friend and artist most interested in the result, and having received his encouragement to proceed, I devoted my little vacation of Christmas to its composition;—and, with the exception of some alterations (for the suggestion of the principal of which I am indebted to him,) succeeded so far as to finish it before the renewal of other (I can hardly say) severer labours. Whether I may succeed in doing more than thus gratifying my own feelings, and testifying their strength by the effort, is, at this time, doubtful;—but, in no event, shall I regret having made it.

At this period I can only, of course, imperfectly estimate the extent of the obligation I shall owe to the performers; but, as no other opportunity may occur, I cannot refrain from thanking them for the zeal and cordiality with which they have thus far supported me. Among them I am happy to find my old and constant friend, Mr. Serle,—who should rather be engaged in embodying his own conceptions than in lending strength to mine. And I cannot refrain from mentioning the sacrifice made to the common



cause by Miss Helen Faucit, in consenting to perform a character far beneath the sphere in which she is entitled to move; and which, even when elevated and graced by her, will, I fear, be chiefly noted for her good-nature in accepting it.

The First Scene of the Third Act, and the Second Scene of the Fourth Act, are omitted in the representation; and some alterations, suggested at rehearsal, have been made in the conduct of the closing Scene.

T. N. T.

*Russell Square, 28th April, 1838.*

## Persons of the Drama,

AS REPRESENTED AT COVENT GARDEN THEATRE.

---

CREON . .	King of Corinth . . . . .	MR. WARDE.
HYLLUS .	Son of Creon . . . . .	MR. ANDERSON.
IPHITUS .	Priest of the Temple of Jupiter the Avenger, at Corinth . . . . }	MR. SERLE.
CALCHAS .	An Athenian, living at Corinth . .	MR. WALDEON.
THOAS .	An Athenian Warrior . . . . .	MR. MACREADY.
PENTHEUS	An Athenian Warrior, his Friend .	MR. DIDDEAR.
LYCUS . .	Master of the Slaves to the King of Corinth . . . . . }	MR. HOWE.

*Athenian and Corinthian Soldiers, &c.*

ISMENE .	Queen of Corinth; second wife of Creon . . . . . }	MRS. WARNER.
CREUSA .	Daughter of Creon; twin-born of his first wife with Hyllus . . }	MISS HELEN FAUCIT.

SCENE—*Corinth, and its immediate neighbourhood.*

TIME OF ACTION—*Two days.*



THE  
ATHENIAN CAPTIVE.  
A TRAGEDY.

---

ACT I.

SCENE I.

*The Acropolis of Corinth.*

CREON *reclining on a bench, beneath open columns.—*

IPHITUS *a little behind him, in the dress of Augury,  
watching the flight of birds. The Sea seen far below,  
in the distance.*

IPHITUS,

Wheel through the ambient air, ye sacred birds,  
In circles still contracting, that aspire  
To share the radiance of yon dazzling beams,  
And 'midst them float from mortal gaze ; ye speak  
In no uncertain language to the sons  
Of Corinth, that the shames they bear from Athens  
Shall speedily be lost in glories won

B

From insolent battalions, that have borne  
Their triumphs to our gates. Rejoice, my king !  
Leave mournful contemplation of the dust,  
To hail the omen !

CREON.

I am so perplex'd  
With the faint tracings age's weakness shapes,  
That I distinguish not the winged forms  
Thou speakest of, from the mists that flicker quick  
On eyes which soon must be all dark. To me  
No omen can be otherwise than sad !

IPHITUS.

Surely, my king—for I will answer thee  
Untrembling, as Jove's minister—these signs  
Should make thy heart beat proudly ; hast not felt  
Upon our loftiest eminence, the blight  
Of that dishonour which alone can slay  
The spirit of a people ;—seen our fanes  
Crowded with suppliants from our wasted fields,  
Shrieking for help in vain, and mourn'd the power  
Of Athens to convert our cloudless sky,  
And the bright sea which circles us, to bounds  
Of a great prison ? If thy kingly soul  
Hath shrunk—as well I know it hath—from shame  
Without example in our story, now  
Bid it expand, as our beleaguer'd gates

Shall open wide to let our heroes pass,  
With brows which glisten to receive the laurel  
From their king's hand.

CREON.

Perchance to see him die.

O, Iphitus! thy king hath well nigh spent  
His store of wealth, of glory, and of power,  
Which made him master of the hopes and strengths  
Of others! While the haggard Fury waits  
To cut the knot which binds his thousand threads  
Of lustrous life, and the sad ghost forsakes  
The palace of its regal clay, to shrink,  
Thin as a beggar's, sceptreless, uncrown'd,  
Unheeded, to the throng'd and silent shore  
Where flattery soothes not, think'st thou it can draw  
A parting comfort from surrounding looks  
Of lusty youth, prepar'd, with beaming joy,  
To hail a young successor?

IPHITUS.

Still thine age  
Is green and hopeful; there is nought about thee  
To speak of mortal sickness, and unnerve  
A soul that once was noble.

CREON.

Priest, forbear!

The life that lingers in me is the witness

With which I may not palter. I may seem  
To-day to wear the look of yesterday,—  
A shrivell'd, doting, peevish, weak old man,  
Who may endure some winters more to strip  
A leaflet daily from him, till he stands  
So bare of happiness, that Death hath scarce  
An art to make him nakeder. My soul  
Begins its solemn whispers of adieu  
To earth's too sweet companionship. Yet, hark !  
It is Creusa's footstep ; is't not, priest ?  
Is not my child approaching us ?

IPHITUS.

Afar

I see the snowy foldings of a robe  
Wave through the column'd avenue ; thy sense  
Is finer than the impatient ear of youth,  
That it should catch the music of a step  
So distant and so gentle.

CREON.

If thou wert

A father, thou wouldst know a father's love  
'Mid nature's weakness, for one failing sense  
Still finds another sharpen'd to attend  
Its finest ministries. Unlike the poms  
That make the dregs of life more bitter, this  
Can sweeten even a king's.

[CREUSA *passes across the stage behind CREON, bearing offerings.*]

She passes on ;  
So ! So ! all leave me. Call her, Iphitus,  
Though that her duty own no touch of fondness,  
I will command her. Am I not her king ?  
Why dost not call ?

*Re-enter CREUSA, who kneels in front to CREON.*

Ah ! thou art there, my child ;  
Methinks my waning sight grows clear, to drink  
The perfect picture of thy beauty in ;  
And I grow gentle—Ah ! too gentle, girl—  
Wherefore didst pass me by without regard,  
Who have scant blessing left save thus to gaze  
And listen to thee ?

CREUSA.

Pardon me, my father,  
If, bearing offerings to the shrine of Jove  
For my sweet brother's safety, anxious thoughts  
Clove to him in the battle with a force  
Which made its strangest shapes of horror live  
As present things ; and, lost in their pursuit,  
I heeded not my father.

CREON.

In the battle ?  
Is Hyllus in the combat 'mid those ranks  
Of iron ? He who hath not rounded yet



His course of generous exercise? I'm weak ;  
Is that the cause? Is he impatient grown  
To put the royal armour on, his sire  
Must never wear again? Oh, no! his youth,  
In its obedient gentleness, hath been  
An infancy prolong'd! It is the Power  
Which strikes me with the portents of the grave,  
That by the sight of his ensanguined corpse  
Would hasten their fulfilment; 'tis well aim'd,  
I shall fall cold before it.

CREUSA.

'Twas a word,  
Dropp'd by the queen in answer to some speech  
In which she fancied slight to Athens, rous'd  
His spirit to an ecstasy; he spurn'd  
The light accoutrements of mimic war;  
Borrow'd a soldier's sword, and, with the troops  
Who sallied forth at day-break, sought the field—  
Where Jupiter protect him!

CREON.

Bid the queen  
Here answer to us. [Exit IPHITUS.]

Rarely will she speak,  
And calmly, yet her sad and solemn words  
Have power to thrill and madden. O my girl,  
Had not my wayward fancy been enthrall'd

By that Athenian loveliness which shone  
From basest vestments, in a form whose grace  
Made the cold beauty of Olympus earth's,  
And drew me to be traitor to the urn  
Which holds thy mother's ashes, I had spent  
My age in sweet renewal of my youth  
With thought of her who gladden'd it, nor known  
The vain endeavour to enforce regard  
From one whose heart is dead amidst the living.

*Re-enter* IPHITUS.

CREON.

Comes the queen hither ? Does she mock our bidding ?

IPHITUS.

At stern Minerva's inmost shrine she kneels,  
And with an arm as rigid and as pale  
As is the giant statue, clasps the foot  
That seems as it would spurn her, yet were stay'd  
By the firm suppliant's will. She looks attent  
As one who caught some hint of distant sounds,  
Yet none from living intercourse of man  
Can pierce that marble solitude. Her face  
Uprais'd, is motionless,—yet while I mark'd it—  
As from its fathomless abode a spring  
Breaks on the bosom of a sullen lake  
And in an instant grows as still,—a hue  
Of blackness trembled o'er it ; her large eye

Kindled with frightful lustre ;—but the shade  
Pass'd instant thence ; her face resum'd its look  
Of stone, as death-like as the aspect pure  
Of the great face divine to which it answered.  
I durst not speak to her.

CREON.

I see it plain ;  
Her thoughts are with our foes, the blood of Athens  
Mantles or freezes in her alien veins ;  
Let her alone. [*Shouts without.*

CREUSA.

Hark !—They would never shout  
If Hyllus were in peril.

CREON.

Were he slain  
In dashing back the dusky wall of shields,  
Beneath which Athens masks her pride of war,  
They would exult and mock the slaughter'd boy  
With Pæans.

CREUSA.

So my brother would have chosen !  
[*Shouts renewed.*

*Enter Corinthian Soldier.*

SOLDIER.

Our foes are driven to their tents, the field  
Is ours—

CREON. [*Hastily interrupting him.*

What of the prince—my son?  
Thou dost avoid his name;—have ye achiev'd  
This noisy triumph with his blood?

SOLDIER.

A wound,  
Slight, as we hope, hath grac'd his early valour,  
And though it draws some colour from his cheek  
Leaves the heart fearless.

CREON.

I will well avenge  
The faintest breath of sorrow which hath dimm'd  
The mirror of his youth. Will he not come?  
Why does he linger, if his wound is slight,  
From the fond arms of him who will avenge it?

SOLDIER.

He comes, my lord.

CREON.

Make way, there! Let me clasp him!

*Enter HYLLUS, pale, as slightly wounded.*

Why does he not embrace me?

[CREUSA runs to HYLLUS, and supports him as he moves  
towards CREON.]

CREUSA.

He is faint,  
Exhausted, breathless,—bleeding. Lean on me,

[To HYLLUS.]

And let me lead thee to the king, who pants  
To bid his youngest soldier welcome.

HYLLUS.

Nay

'Tis nothing. Silly trembler!—See, my limbs  
Are pliant and my sinews docile still. [*Kneels to CREON.*  
Kneel with me; pray our father to forgive  
The disobedience of his truant son,  
His first—oh, may it prove the last!

[CREUSA kneels with HYLLUS to CREON.]

CREON.

My son!

Who fancied I was angry?

*Enter ISMENE.*

(*To ISMENE.*) Art thou come,  
To gaze upon the perill'd youth who owes  
His wound to thee?

ISMENE.

He utter'd shallow scorn  
Of Athens;—which he ne'er will speak again.

CREON.

Wouldst dare to curb his speech?

HYLLUS.

Forbear, my father ;

The queen says rightly. In that idle mood,  
Which youth's excess of happiness makes wanton,  
I slighted our illustrious foes, whose arms  
Have, with this mild correction, taught my tongue  
An apter phrase of modesty, and shewn  
What generous courage is, which till this day  
I dimly guess'd at.

CREON.

Canst thou tell his name,  
Who impious drew the blood of him who soon—  
Too soon, alas !—shall reign in Corinth?

HYLLUS.

One

I'm proud to claim my master in great war ;  
With whom contesting, I have tasted first  
The joy which animates the glorious game  
Where fiercest opposition of brave hearts  
Makes them to feel their kindred ;—one who spar'd me  
To grace another fight,—the sudden smart  
His sword inflicted, made me vainly rush  
To grapple with him ; from his fearful grasp

I sank to earth ; as I lay prone in dust,  
The broad steel shiv'ring in my eyes, that strove  
To keep their steady gaze, I met his glance,  
Where pity triumph'd ; quickly he return'd  
His falchion to its sheath, and with a hand  
Frank and sustaining as a brother's palm,  
Uprais'd me ;—while he whisper'd in mine ear,  
“ Thou hast dar'd well, young soldier,” our hot troops  
Environ'd him, and bore him from the plain  
Our army's noblest captive.

CREON.

He shall die ;  
The gen'rous falsehood of thy speech is vain.

CREUSA.

O no ! my brother's words were never false ;  
The heroic picture proves his truth ;—they bring  
A gallant prisoner towards us. Sure, 'tis he.

*Enter THOAS, in armour, guarded by Corinthian Soldiers,  
and LYCUS, Master of the Slaves.*

SOLDIER.

My lord, we bring the captive, whom we found  
In combat with the prince.

HYLLUS.

Say rather, found  
Raising that prince whose rashness he chastis'd,  
And taught how he should treat a noble foe.

CREON.

[*To the Soldiers.*

Answer to me ! Why have ye brought this man,  
Whom the just gods have yielded to atone  
For princely blood he shed, in pride of arms ?  
Remove that helmet.

THOAS.

He who stirs to touch  
My arms, shall feel a dying warrior's grasp.  
I will not doff my helmet till I yield  
My neck to your slave's butchery ; how soon  
That stroke may fall, I care not.

CREUSA.

[*To HYLLUS.*

Hyllus, speak !

Why thus transfix'd ? Wilt thou not speak for him  
Who spar'd a life, which, light perchance to thee,  
Is the most precious thing to me on earth ?

THOAS.

[*To CREUSA.*

Ere I descend to that eternal gloom  
Which opens to enfold me, let me bless  
The vision that hath cross'd it !

HYLLUS.

[*To CREON.*

If thou slay him,

I will implore the mercy of the sword  
To end me too ; and, that sad grace withheld,  
Will kneel beside his corpse till nature give  
Her own dismissal to me.



ISMENE. [*Speaking slowly to CREON.*]

Let him breathe  
A slave's ignoble life out here; 'twill prove  
The sterner fortune.

CREON.

Hearken to me, prisoner!  
My boy hath won this choice—immediate death,  
Or life-long portion with my slaves.

THOAS.

Dost dare  
Insult a son of Athens by the doubt  
Thy words imply? Wert thou in manhood's prime,  
Amidst thy trembling slaves would I avenge  
The foul suggestion, with the desperate strength  
Of fated valour; but thou art in years,  
And I should blush to harm thee;—let me die.

CREUSA.

O do not fling away thy noble life,  
For it is rich in treasures of its own,  
Which Fortune cannot touch, and vision'd glories  
Shall stream around its bondage.

THOAS.

I have dream'd  
Indeed of greatness, lovely one, and felt  
The very dream worth living for, while hope,  
To make it real, surviv'd; and I have lov'd

To image thought, the mirror of great deeds,  
Fed by the past to might which should impel  
And vivify the future;—blending thus  
The aims and triumphs of a hero's life.  
But to cheat hopeless infamy with shows  
Of nobleness, and filch a feeble joy  
In the vain spasms of the slavish soul,  
Were foulest treachery to the god within me.  
No, lady; from the fissure of a rock,  
Scath'd and alone, my brief existence gush'd,  
A passion'd torrent;—let it not be lost  
In miry sands, but having caught one gleam  
Of loveliness to grace it, dash from earth  
To darkness and to silence. Lead me forth—  
(*To CREUSA.*) The Gods requite thee!

CREON.

Hath the captive chosen?

I will not grant another moment;—speak!  
Wilt serve or perish?

HYLLUS.

[*Throwing himself before* THOAS.

Do not answer yet!

Grant him a few short minutes to decide,  
And let me spend them with him.

CREON.

[*Rising.*

Be it so, then!

Kneel, prisoner, to the prince who won thee grace

No other mortal could have gain'd :—remember  
The master of my slaves attends the word  
Thou presently shalt utter ; tame thy pride  
To own his government, or he must bind,  
And slay thee. Daughter, come ! The queen attends us.

[*Exeunt CREON and SOLDIERS.*]

CREUSA.

[*To HYLLUS, as she passes him.*]

Thou wilt not leave him till he softens.

[*ISMENE follows ; as she passes THOAS, she speaks in a low and solemn tone.*]

ISMENE.

Live !

THOAS.

Who gave that shameful counsel ?

ISMENE.

[*Passing on.*]

One of Athens. [*Exit.*]

[*Exeunt all but LYCUS, the Master of the Slaves,—*]

THOAS and HYLLUS.

THOAS.

[*Abstractedly.*]

What words are these, which bid my wayward blood,  
That centred at my heart with icy firmness,  
Come tingling back through all my veins ? I seem  
Once more to drink Athenian ether in,  
And the fair city's column'd glories flash  
Upon my soul !

LYCUS.

My lord, I dare not wait.

HYLLUS.      [*Eagerly to LYCUS.*]

He yields ;—I read it in his softening gaze ;  
It speaks of life.

THOAS.

Yes ; I will owe life to thee.

HYLLUS.

Thou hear'st him, Lycus. Let me know the name  
Of him whom I could deem my friend.

THOAS.

My name !

I have none worthy of thy ear ; I thought  
To arm a common sound with deathless power ;  
'Tis past ; thou only mark'st me from the crowd  
Of crawling earth-worms ;—thou may'st call me, Thoas.

LYCUS.      [*Coming forward.*]

My prince, forgive me ; I must take his armour,  
And lead him hence.

THOAS.

Great Jupiter, look down !

HYLLUS.

Thoas, thy faith is pledged. [*To LYCUS.*] Stand back awhile,  
If thou hast nature. Thoas will to me  
Resign his arms.

THOAS.     *[Taking off his helmet.]*

To a most noble hand

I yield the glories of existence up,  
And bid them long adieu ! This plume, which now  
Hangs motionless, as if it felt the shame  
Its owner bears, wav'd in my boyish thoughts  
Ere I was free to wear it, as the sign,  
The dancing image of my bounding hopes,  
That imag'd it above a throng of battles,  
Waving where blows were fiercest. Take it hence—  
Companion of brave fancies, vanish'd now  
For ever, follow them !

*[HYLLUS takes the helmet from THOAS, and passes it to  
LYCUS.]*

HYLLUS.

'Tis nobly done ;

No doubt that it again shall clasp thy brow,  
And the plume wave in victory. Thy sword ?  
Forgive me ; I must filch it for awhile :  
Hide it—O deem it so—in idle sport,  
And keep thy chidings, till I give it back  
Again to smite and spare.

THOAS.

Too generous youth,  
Permit my depth of sorrow to be calm,  
Unruffled by vain hope.                   *[Takes off his sword.]*  
Farewell, old sword,

Thou wert the bright inheritance which grac'd  
My finish'd years of boyhood—all that time  
And fortune spar'd of those from whom I drew  
The thirst of greatness. In how proud an hour  
Did I first clasp thee with untrembling hand,  
Fit thee, with fond exactness, to my side,  
And in the quaint adornments of thy sheath  
Guess deeds of valour, acted in old time  
By some forgotten chief, whose generous blood  
I felt within my swelling veins ! Farewell !

[THOAS gives his sword to HYLLUS, who delivers it to  
LYCUS.

HYLLUS.

[Diffidently.

Thy buckler ?

THOAS.

[Takes off his buckler eagerly, and delivers it to HYLLUS.

I rejoice to part with that ;  
My bosom needs no bulwark save its own,  
For I am only man now. If my heart  
Should in its throbbing burst, 'twill beat against  
An unapparell'd casing, and be still. [Going.

HYLLUS.

[Hesitatingly.

Hold !—one thing more—thy girdle holds a knife ;  
I grieve that I must ask it.

THOAS.

By the sense  
Which 'mid delights I feel thou hast not lost,

Of what, in dread extremity, the brave,  
Stripp'd of all other refuge, would embrace,—  
I do adjure thee,—rob me not of this !

HYLLUS.

Conceal it in thy vest.

[THOAS *hastily places his dagger in his bosom,*  
*and takes the hand of* HYLLUS.

THOAS.

We understand  
Each other's spirit ;—thou hast call'd me friend,  
And though in bonds, I answer to the name,  
And give it thee again.

LYCUS (*advancing*).

The time is spent  
Beyond the king's allowance : I must lead  
The captive to the court, where he may meet  
His fellows, find his station, and put on  
The habit he must wear.

THOAS.

Do I hear rightly ?  
Must an Athenian warrior's free-born limbs  
Be clad in withering symbols of the power  
By which man marks his property in flesh,  
Bones, sinews, feelings, lying Nature framed  
For human ? They shall rend me piecemeal first !

HYLLUS.

Thoas—friend—comrade,—recollect thy word,  
Which now to break were worse disgrace than power  
Can fix upon thee, bids thee bear awhile  
This idle shame. I shall be proud to walk  
A listener at thy side, while generous thoughts  
And arts of valour, which may make them deeds,  
Enrich my youth. Soon shall we 'scape the court,  
Ply the small bark upon the summer sea,  
Gay careless voyagers, who leave the shore  
With all its vain distinctions, for a world  
Of dancing foam and light; till eve invites  
To some tall cavern, where the sea-nymphs raise  
Sweet melodies; there shalt thou play the prince,  
And I will put thy slavish vestments on,  
And yield thee duteous service;—in our sport  
Almost as potent as light Fortune is,  
Who in her wildest freaks but shifts the robe  
Of circumstance, and leaves the hearts it cloath'd  
Unchanged and free as ours.

THOAS.

I cannot speak.

Come—or mine eyes will witness me a slave  
To my own frailty's masterdom.—Come on !

[To LRCUS.

Thou hast done thy office gently. Lead the way. [*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT I.



## ACT II.

## SCENE I.

*A Court in the Palace of CREON.*

*Enter CREON and LYCUS.*

CREON.

How does the proud Athenian bear his part  
In servile duty?

LYCUS.

I have never seen

So brave a patience. The severest toils  
Look graceful in him, from the facile skill  
With which his strength subdues them. Few his words  
By question drawn, yet gentle as a child's ;  
And if, in pauses of his work, his eye  
Will glisten, and his bosom heave ; anon  
He starts as from a dream, submissive bows,  
And plies his work again.

CREON.

Thou dost espouse  
His cause. Beware ! he hurl'd defiance on me,  
Disdain'd my age, as if his pride of strength  
Made him in bondage greater than a king  
Sick and infirm as I am ; he shall feel

What yet an old man can inflict. He comes ;  
Why does he leave his duty ?

LYCUS.

'Tis the hour  
Of rest—of food, if he would take it ; here  
He's privileged to walk.

CREON.

Let's stand aside.

[CREON and LYCUS retire from sight.]

*Enter THOAS, in the dress of a Slave.*

THOAS.

Had I been born to greatness, or achieved  
My fame, methinks that I could smile at this ;  
Taste a remember'd sweetness in the thought  
Of pleasure snatch'd from fate ; or feed my soul  
With the high prospect of serene renown  
Beetling above this transitory shame  
In distant years. But to be wither'd thus—  
In the first budding of my fortune, doom'd  
To bear the death of hope, and to outlive it !  
Gods, keep me patient ! I will to my task. [Going.]

*Re-enter CREON and LYCUS.*

LYCUS.

Wilt thou not join thy fellows at the feast,  
And taste a cup of wine the king vouchsafes  
For merriment to-day ?

THOAS.

What ! are they merry ?

LYCUS.

Dost thou not hear them ?

THOAS.

They are slaves, indeed !

Forgive me, I would rather to the quarry. [Going.]

*Enter Messenger.*

MESSENGER (*addressing CREON*).

My lord, the games in honour of our triumph

Await thee,—first the chariot race, in which

Thy son prepares to strive. The wrestlers next—

CREON.

Let them begin. [Exit Messenger.]

Methinks yon captive's strength,

No longer rebel, might afford us sport.

Thoas !

THOAS.

I wait thy pleasure.

CREON.

Thou wert train'd

Doubtless, at home, to manly exercise,

And I would have thee show the youth of Corinth

How the Athenians throw the quoit and wrestle.

THOAS.

My lord, I cannot do it !

CREON.

One so strong  
As thou, had he been native here, would joy  
In sports like these.

THOAS.

O, have I not enjoy'd them !  
My lord, I am content to toil and mourn—  
'Tis the slave's part ; these limbs are thine to use  
In vilest service till their sinews fail ;  
But not a nerve shall bend in sports I lov'd  
When freeman to indulge in, for the gaze  
Of those who were my foes and are my masters.

*Enter Messenger, in haste.*

MESSENGER.

My lord—the prince—

THOAS.

Is he in peril ?

MESSENGER.

As his chariot, far  
Before all rivals, glitter'd to the goal,  
The coursers plung'd as if some fearful thing  
Unseen by human eyes had glar'd on theirs ;  
Then with a speed like lightning flash'd, along  
The verge of the dark precipice which girds  
The rock-supported plain, and round it still

In frightful circles whirl the youth ; no power  
Of man can stay them.

THOAS.

Friend, I come ! I come !

LYCUS. [*Attempting to stop him.*]

Thou must not go.

THOAS.

Away ! I'm master now. [*Rushes out.*]

CREON.

My son ! my son ! I shall embrace thy corpse,  
And lie beside it. Yet I cannot bear  
This anguish ; dead or living, I will seek thee ! [*Exit.*]

LYCUS. [*Looking out.*]

How the slave spurns the dust ; with what a power  
He cleaves the wondering throng,—they hide him now,—  
Speed him, ye gods of Corinth !

*Enter CREUSA.*

CREUSA.

Whence that cry

Of horror mingled with my brother's name ?  
Is he in danger ? Wherefore dost thou stand  
Thus silently, and gaze on empty air ?  
Speak !

*Enter IPHITUS. [CREUSA addressing him.]*

From thy sacred lips the truth  
Must flow.

IPHITUS.

Be calm ; thy brother is preserv'd ;  
Urg'd by his furious steeds, his chariot hung  
Scarce pois'd on the rock's margin, where the vale  
Lies deepest under it ; an instant more,  
And Hyllus, who serenely stood with eyes  
Fix'd on the heavens, had perish'd ; when a form  
With god-like swiftness clove the astonish'd crowd ;  
Appear'd before the coursers, scarce upheld  
By tottering marl ;—strain'd forward o'er the gulf  
Of vacant ether ; caught the floating reins,  
And drew them into safety with a touch  
So fine, that sight scarce witness'd it. The prince  
Is in his father's arms.

CREUSA.

Thou dost not speak  
The hero's name ;—yet can I guess it well.

IPHITUS.

Thoas.—He comes.

CREUSA.

Let me have leave to thank him.

[*Exeunt* IPHITUS and LYCUS.]

*Enter* THOAS.

Hero ! accept a maiden's fervent thanks,  
All that she has to offer, for a life  
Most precious to her.

THOAS.

Speak not of it, fair one !

Life, in my estimate, 's too poor a boon  
To merit thanks so rich.

CREUSA.

Not such a life

As his to me. We both together drew  
Our earliest breath, and one unconscious crime  
Shar'd ; for the hour that yielded us to day  
Snatch'd her who bore us. Thence attach'd we grew,  
As if some portion of that mother's love  
Each for the other cherish'd ; twin-born joys,  
Hopes, fancies, and affections, each hath watch'd  
In the clear mirror of the other's soul,  
By that sweet union doubled. Thou hast sav'd  
Two lives in saving Hyllus.

THOAS.

'Tis not meet

That such a wretch as I, in garb like this,

*[Looking at his dress, and shuddering.]*

Should listen to the speech of one so fair ;  
It will unfit me for my tasks.

CREUSA.

Thy tasks ?

O hard injustice !

*Enter HYLLUS, CREUSA meeting him.*

Brother, join thy thanks  
To mine. [HYLLUS and CREUSA embrace.

THOAS.

No more. [Retiring.

Grant, ye immortal gods,  
So beautiful a bond be never broken !  
[Exit THOAS.

CREUSA.

He speaks of tasks. My brother, can'st endure  
To see a hero who hath twice preserv'd  
Thy life—upon whose forehead virtue sits  
Enthron'd in regal majesty—thus held  
In vilest thralldom ?

HYLLUS.

Ah ! my sweet Creusa,  
Thy words breathe more than gratitude.

CREUSA.

My brother,  
I pray thee, do not look into my face.

HYLLUS.

Nay, raise thy head, and let thine eye meet mine ;  
It reads no anger there. Thy love is pure  
And noble as thyself, and nobly plac'd ;  
And one day shall be honor'd.



CREUSA.

Spare me !

HYLLUS.

Come,

The banquet hath begun ; the king expects us.

[*Exeunt.*]

---

SCENE II.

*Banqueting-Hall in CREON'S Palace.*

CREON, ISMENE, IPHITUS, CALCHAS, and *Corinthians.*  
*seated at the Banquet.*

CREON.

[*Rising.*]

I thank ye for my son ;—he is unharm'd,  
And soon will join our revelry.

ISMENE.

We lack  
Attendance. Where is Thoas ? It were fit  
In Corinth's day of triumph, *he* should wait  
On his victorious enemies. Go seek him.

[*Exit an Attendant.*]

CREON.

I would have spar'd his services to-day ;  
He is but young in service, and hath done

A glorious deed. Drink round, my friends, and pledge  
My son once more.

ISMENE.

My sovereign, I should deem  
So great a master in the skill to tame  
The nature struggling in a free-born soul,  
Would think it wisdom to begin betimes,  
When an Athenian spirit should be stifled.  
If thou would'st bend him to the yoke, 'twere best  
Commence to-day ;—to-morrow 't may be vain.

*Enter* THOAS.

Athenian !—slave !—'tis well that thou hast come ;  
Else might we fear thou didst not feel so proud  
As such a man as thou should feel, to wait  
Upon his victor. Carry round the cup,  
And bear it to the king, with duteous looks.

THOAS.

I will endeavour, lady.

*[ Takes the cup, and speaking aside.*

They will join

In very openness of heart, to cast  
This shame upon me ; take the mantling cup  
With thoughtless pleasure from a warrior's hand,  
And smile to see it quiver ; bless the wine  
With household names, sweet thoughts of friends afar,

Or love which death hath hallowed ; and while springs  
Of cordial joy are quicken'd by the draught,  
Will bid affections, generous as their own,  
Shrink, agonize, and wither !

ISMENE.

Slave ! attend !

*Enter HYLLUS and CREUSA.*

CREON.

Hyllus, our friends have pledg'd thee ; take thy place,  
And thank them.

HYLLUS.

*[Advancing.]*

I am grateful.—Thoas, thus ?

CREON.

We blam'd thy absence, daughter. Sit beside  
The queen.

CREUSA.

A humbler place befits me, father.

*[Sits at the end of the circle.]*

*[THOAS attempts to hand the cup.]*

CREUSA.

*[To HYLLUS.]*

Brother, dost see ?

HYLLUS. *[Aside to THOAS, taking the  
cup from him.]*

Thoas, I blush at this ;  
Give me the cup.—Corinthian citizens,

This is a moment when I cannot trust  
The grace of serving you to any hand  
Except mine own. The wine will send a glow  
Of rare delight when minister'd by one  
Who hath this day touch'd life's extremest verge,  
And been most bravely rescued.

[HYLLUS *hands the cup.*

ISMENE.

Will the king

Permit this mockery?

CREON.

Foolish stripling, cease !

Let the slave hand the cup ; and having pass'd  
Another round, fill high, for I will pour  
A great libation out, with such a prayer  
As every heart shall echo while the dust  
Of Corinth drinks it in.

[THOAS *takes the cup, and approaches CREUSA.*

CREUSA.

Nay, tremble not.

Think thou dost pay free courtesy to one  
Who in the fulness of a grateful heart,  
Implores the gods to cherish thee with hope  
For liberty and honour.

THOAS.

Words so sweet

Reward and o'erpay all.

D

CREON.

Corinthians, rise !

Before the gods, who have this day espoused  
The cause of Corinth, I this votive cup  
Pour with one glorious prayer—Ruin to Athens !

[THOAS dashes down the cup he is about to hand to the King.]

THOAS.

Ruin to Athens ! who dares echo that ?  
Who first repeats it dies. These limbs are arm'd  
With vigour from the gods that watch above  
Their own immortal offspring. Do ye dream,  
Because chance lends ye one insulting hour,  
That ye can quench the purest flame the gods  
Have lit from heaven's own fire ?

HYLLUS. [Trying to appease the  
guests.]

.. 'Tis ecstasy—

Some phrenzy shakes him.

THOAS.

No ! I call the gods,  
Who bend attentive from their azure thrones,  
To witness to the truth of that which throbs  
Within me now. 'Tis not a city crown'd  
With olive and enrich'd with peerless fanes  
Ye would dishonour, but an opening world  
Diviner than the soul of man hath yet

Been gifted to imagine—truths serene,  
Made visible in beauty, that shall glow  
In everlasting freshness ; unapproach'd  
By mortal passion ; pure amidst the blood  
And dust of conquests ; never waxing old ;  
But on the stream of time, from age to age,  
Casting bright images of heavenly youth  
To make the world less mournful. I behold them !  
And ye, frail insects of a day, would quaff  
“ Ruin to Athens !”

CREON.

Are ye stricken all  
To statues, that ye hear these scornful boasts,  
And do not seize the traitor ? Bear him hence,  
And let the executioner's keen steel  
Prevent renewal of this outrage.

IPHITUS.

Hold !  
Some god hath spoken through him.

ISMENE.

Priest ! we need  
No counsel from thee.

HYLLUS.

Father, he will bend—  
'Twas madness—was't not, Thoas ?—*answer me :*  
Retract thy words !

THOAS.

I've spoken, and I'll die.

ISMENE.

'Twere foolish clemency to end so soon  
The death-pangs of a slave who thus insults  
The king of Corinth. I can point a cell  
Deep in the rock, where he may wait thy leisure  
To frame his tortures.

HYLLUS.

[To CREON.]

If thou wilt not spare,  
Deal with him in the light of day, and gaze  
Thyself on what thou dost, but yield him not  
A victim to that cold and cruel heart.

ISMENE.

[*Aside.*]

Cold! I must bear that too. (*Aloud.*) Thou hear'st him,  
king;  
Thou hear'st the insolence, which waxes bolder  
Each day, as he expects thy lingering age  
Will yield him Corinth's throne.

CREON.

Ungrateful boy!

Go, wander alien from my love; avoid  
The city's bounds; and if thou dare return  
Till I proclaim thy pardon, think to share  
The fate of the rash slave for whom thou plead'st.

THOAS.

King, I will grovel in the dust before thee ;  
Will give these limbs to torture ; nay, will strain  
Their free-born sinews for thy very sport,  
So thou recall the sentence on thy son.

CREON.

Thou wilt prolong his exile. To thy cell ! [ *To* THOAS.  
There wait thy time of death ;—my heart is sick—  
But I have spoken.

HYLLUS.

Come with me, sweet sister,  
And take a dearer parting than this scene  
Admits. Look cheerily ;—I leave thy soul  
A duty which shall lift it from the sphere  
Of sighs and tremblings. Father, may the gods  
So cherish thee that thou may'st never mourn,  
With more than fond regret, the loss of one  
Whose love stays with thee ever.

[*Exeunt* HYLLUS and CREUSA.

IPHITUS.

[*Offering to support* CREON.

Hold ! he faints !

CREON.

No ;—I can walk unaided—rest will soothe me.

[*Exit* CREON.



ISMENE.

Good night, my friends !

*[Exeunt all but ISMENE, THOAS, and CALCHAS.]*

Thou, Calchas, wait and guard  
The prisoner to his cell. Thou know'st the place.

THOAS.

Lead on.

ISMENE.

*[Coming to the front to THOAS.]*

Thou wilt not sleep?

THOAS.

I wish no sleep  
To reach these eyes, till the last sleep of all.

ISMENE.

Others may watch as well as thou.

THOAS.

Strange words  
Thou speakest, fearful woman ; are they mockeries ?  
Methinks they sound too solemn.

ISMENE.

Said I not,  
I am of Athens ? Hush ! These walls have echoes ;  
Thy gaoler is of Athens, too ; at midnight  
He shall conduct thee where we may discourse  
In safety. Wilt thou follow him ?

THOAS.

I will.

ISMENE.

'Tis well. Conduct the prisoner to his dungeon.  
Remember, thou hast promis'd me.

THOAS.

My blood  
Is cold as ice ; yet will I keep the faith  
I plight to thee.

[*Exeunt* THOAS and CALCHAS.

ISMENE (*alone*).

It is the heroic form  
Which I have seen in watching, and in sleep  
Frightfully broken, through the long, long, years  
Which I have wasted here in chains, more sad  
Than those which bind the death-devoted slave  
To his last stony pillow. Fiery shapes,  
That have glar'd in upon my bed to mock  
My soul with hopes of vengeance, keep your gaze  
Fix'd stedfast on me now ! My hour is nigh !

[*Exit.*

END OF ACT II.

## ACT III.

## SCENE I.

*The Dungeon in the Rock.*

THOAS *discovered, alone.*

THOAS.

Ye walls of living rock, whose time-shed stains  
Attest that ages have revolv'd since hands  
Of man were arm'd to pierce your solid frame,  
And, from your heart of adamant, hew out  
Space for his fellow's wretchedness, I hail  
A refuge in your stillness; tyranny  
Will not stretch forth its palsied arm to fret  
Its captive here. Ye cannot clasp me round  
With darkness so substantial, as can shut  
The airy visions from me which foreshew  
The glories Athens will achieve, when I  
Am passionless as ye. I hear a step!  
It is that mournful lady's minister,  
Who comes to waken feelings I would bid  
For ever sleep. A light, as of a star,  
Gleams in the narrow cavern's steep descent;

And now a form, as of a goddess, glides  
To illuminate its blackness. 'Tis Creusa !  
My heart is not yet stone.

*Enter CREUSA.*

I venture here  
Thus boldly to perform a holy office,  
Which should have been my brother's.—When he fled  
The city of his nurture, his last thoughts  
Were bent on his preserver ; he bequeathed  
His strong injunction never to forsake  
The aim of thy deliverance. I exult  
That heaven thus far has prosper'd it ; be quick,  
And follow me to freedom.

THOAS.

Did'st thou say  
To freedom, lovely one ?

CREUSA.

If thou wilt haste ;  
The path is clear ; the city wrapt in sleep ;  
I know the pass-word at the gates—how learn'd  
By quaint device, I'll tell thee when we meet  
In safety,—if we ever meet again !

THOAS.

And dost thou wish it ?

CREUSA.

Do I wish it ? Yes !

And on the swift fulfilment of that wish  
My life is wager'd.

THOAS.

There is more than life  
To me in these sweet words—speak them again—  
But no;—once heard they linger on the ear  
Which drank them in, for ever. Shapeless rocks  
That witness to the sound, rejoice! No fane  
Of alabaster while the breeze has slept  
In circling myrtles, and the moon disclos'd  
Young love's first blush to the rapt eyes of him  
Whose happy boldness rais'd it, rivals you  
In sanctity which rich affection lends  
To things of earthly mould. Methinks ye spring  
Rounded to columns; your dank mists are curl'd  
Upwards in heavenly shapes, and breathe perfume,  
While every niche which caught the music speeds  
Delicious echoes to the soul. 'Twere bliss  
To dwell for ever here.

CREUSA.

O linger not;  
The watch will change at midnight.

THOAS.

Midnight—Jove!—

I cannot go.

CREUSA.

Not go! I ask no thanks—

No recompense—no boon,—save the delight  
Of saving thee ; for this I've perill'd all—  
Life, freedom, fame,—and now thou tell'st me, proud one,  
That I have perill'd all in vain.

THOAS.

Forbear,

In mercy ; I have pledg'd my word to wait  
A messenger the Queen will send at midnight,  
To bring me to her presence.

CREUSA.

To the Queen ?

What would she with thee ? She is steel'd 'gainst nature ;  
I never knew her shed a tear, nor heard  
A sigh break from her,—oft she seeks a glen  
Hard by the temple of avenging Jove,  
Which sinks mid blasted rocks, whose narrow gorge  
Scarce gives the bold explorer space ; its sides,  
Glistening in marble blackness, rise aloft  
From the scant margin of a pool, whose face  
No breeze e'er dimpled ; in its furthest shade  
A cavern yawns, where poisonous vapours rise  
That none may enter it and live ; they spread  
Their rolling films of ashy white like shrouds  
Around the fearful orifice, and kill  
The very lichens which the earthless stone  
Would nurture ;—whether evil men, or things

More terrible, meet this sad lady there,  
I know not—she will lead thee thither !

THOAS.

No—

Not if guilt point the way, if it be sorrow  
I must endure it rather than the curse  
Which lies upon the faithless heart of him  
Who breaks a promise plighted to the wretched ;  
For she *is* wretched.

CREUSA.

So am I. Methinks

I am grown selfish ; for it is not suffering  
I dread should fall upon thee, but I tremble  
Lest witchery of that awful woman's grief  
Lead thee to some rash deed. Thou art a soldier,  
A young proficient in the game of death,  
And mayst be wrought on—

THOAS.

Do not fear for me ;

Where shews of glory beckon I'll not wait  
To pluck away the radiant masks and find  
Death under them ; but at the thought of blood  
Shed save in hottest fight, my spirit shrinks  
As from some guilt not aim'd at human things  
But at the majesty of gods.

CREUSA.

Forgive me ;

It was a foolish terror swept across  
My soul,—I should not have forgot 'twas mercy  
That made thee captive.

*Voice without.*

Thoas !

THOAS.

I am call'd.

The voice came that way—still thy upward path  
Is open—haste—he must not find thee here.

CREUSA.

My prayers—all that the weak can give—are thine.  
Farewell ! [Exit.

THOAS.

The gods for ever guard thee !  
She glides away—she gains the topmost ridge—  
She's safe. Now can I welcome fate with bosom  
Steel'd to endure the worst.

*Voice without.*

Thoas !

THOAS.

I come ! [Exit.



## SCENE II.

*The Hall of Statues, in CREON'S Palace.*

*Enter ISMENE.*

ISMENE.

Why tarries Calchas? It is past the hour  
Of deepest night, when he should hither guide  
The avenger of my sorrows. Gods of Athens!  
Whom strong expostulation hath compell'd  
To look upon my shames, one little hour  
I ask your aid; that granted, never more  
Shall the constraining force of passion break  
Your dread repose. I hear a warrior's step—  
Ye answer, and ye bless me.

*Enter CALCHAS and THOAS.*

It is well.

[*To CALCHAS.*

Withdraw, and wait without. I must confer  
With this unyielding man, alone.

[*Exit CALCHAS.*

THOAS.

I wait

To learn thy will;—why thou hast bid me leave  
The stubborn rock, where I had grown as dull,  
As painless, as the cell to which thy breath  
Consign'd me?—thou, who urg'd the king to wreak

His most inglorious spleen on one too low  
To be mark'd out for anger, too resolv'd  
To heed it !

ISMENE.

I beheld in thee a soldier,  
Born of that glorious soil whose meanest son  
Is nobler than barbarian kings, with arm  
Worthy to serve a daughter, who has claim .  
On its best blood. But there is softness in thee,  
Weakening thy gallant nature, which may need  
The discipline of agony and shame  
To master it. Hast thou already learn'd  
Enough to steel thee for a generous deed ;  
Or shall I wait till thou hast linger'd long  
In sorrow's mighty school ? I'm mistress in it,  
And know its lessons well.

THOAS.

If thou hast aught  
Of honor to suggest, I need no more  
To fit me for thy purpose ; if thy aim  
Hath taint of treachery or meanness in it,  
I think no pain will bend me to thy will ;  
At least, I pray the gods so !

ISMENE.

Had'st thou borne  
Long years of lingering wretchedness like mine,  
Thou would'st not play the casuist thus. 'Tis well

For lusty youth, that casts no glance beyond  
To-morrow's fight or game, which values life  
A gewgaw, to be perill'd at a plunge  
From some tall rock into an eddying gulph,  
For the next revel's glory, to collect  
The blood into the cheek, and bravely march  
Amidst admiring people to swift death,  
And call its heedlessness of what it yields—  
A sacrifice heroic. But who knows,  
Who guesses, save the woman that endures,  
What 'tis to pine each weary day in forms  
All counterfeit;—each night to seek a couch  
Throng'd by the phantoms of revenge, till age  
Find her in all things weaken'd, save the wish,  
The longing of the spirit, which laughs out  
In mockery of the withering frame! O Thoas,  
I have endured all this—I, who am sprung  
From the great race of Theseus!

THOAS.

From the race  
Of Theseus!—of the godlike man whose name  
Hath shone upon my childhood as a star  
With magic power?

ISMENE.

Reduc'd to basest needs  
By slow decay in Attica, array'd

In hateful splendour here, I bear small trace  
Of whence I sprung. No matter—spurn'd—disown'd  
By living kindred, I have converse held  
With those of my great family whom Death  
Hath stripp'd of all but glory ; and they wait  
The triumph of this hour to hail me theirs.

THOAS.

Shame to our city, who allowed a matron  
Of that great race to languish !

ISMENE.

Let it pass ;  
A single grief—a short and casual wrong—  
Which—in that sense of ages past and hopes  
Resplendent for the future, which are center'd  
In the great thought of country, and make rich  
The poorest citizen who feels a share  
In her—is nothing. Had she sought my blood,  
To mingle with the dust before the rush  
Of some triumphant entry, I had shed it ;  
And while my life gush'd forth, had tasted joy  
Akin to her rapt hero's. 'Tis thy lot—  
Thy glorious lot—to give me all I live for,—  
Freedom and vengeance.

THOAS.

What would'st have me do ?

E

ISMENE.

I have not wasted all the shows of power  
Which mock'd my grief, but used them to conceal  
The sparks which tyrant fickleness had lit,  
And sloth had left to smoulder. In the depths  
Of neighbouring caverns, foes of Creon meet  
Who will obey thee ; lead them thence to-night—  
Surprise the palace—slay this hated king,—  
Or bear him as a slave to Athens.

THOAS.

Never !

I am a foe to Corinth—not a traitor,  
Nor will I league with treason. In the love  
Of my own land, I honour his who cleaves  
To the scant graces of the wildest soil,  
As I do to the loveliness, the might,  
The hope, of Athens. Aught else man can do,  
In honor, shall be thine.

ISMENE.

I thought I knew  
Athenians well ; and yet, thy speech is strange.  
Whence drew thou these affections,—whence these thoughts  
Which reach beyond a soldier's sphere ?

THOAS.

From Athens ;

Her groves ; her halls ; her temples ; nay, her streets  
Have been my teachers. I had else been rude,

For I was left an orphan, in the charge  
Of an old citizen, who gave my youth  
Rough though kind nurture. Fatherless, I made  
The city and her skies my home; have watch'd  
Her various aspects with a child's fond love;  
Hung in chill morning o'er the mountain's brow,  
And, as the dawn broke slowly, seen her grow  
Majestic from the darkness, till she fill'd  
The sight and soul alike; enjoy'd the storm  
Which wrapt her in the mantle of its cloud,  
While every flash that shiver'd it reveal'd  
Some exquisite proportion, pictur'd once  
And ever to the gazer;—stood entranc'd  
In rainy moonshine, as, one side, uprose  
A column'd shadow, ponderous as the rock  
Which held the Titan groaning with the sense  
Of Jove's injustice; on the other, shapes  
Of dreamlike softness drew the fancy far  
Into the glistening air; but most I felt  
Her loveliness, when summer-evening tints  
Gave to my lonely childhood sense of home.

ISMENE.

And was no spot amidst that radiant waste  
A home to thee indeed?

THOAS.

The hut which held  
My foster-father had for me no charms,

E 2

Save those his virtues shed upon its rudeness.  
I lived abroad ;—and yet there is a spot  
Where I have felt that faintness of the heart  
Which traces of oblivious childhood bring  
Upon ripe manhood ; where small heaps of stones,  
Blacken'd by fire, bear witness to a tale  
Of rapine which destroyed my mother's cot,  
And bore her thence to exile.

ISMENE.

Mighty gods !

Where stand these ruins ?

THOAS.

On a gentle slope,  
Broken by workings of an ancient quarry,  
About a furlong from the western gate,  
Stand these remains of penury ; one olive,  
Projecting o'er the cottage site which fire  
Had blighted, with two melancholy stems,  
Stream'd o'er its meagre vestiges.

ISMENE.

'Tis plain !

Hold ! hold ! my courage. Let the work be done,  
And then I shall aspire. I must not wait  
Another hour for vengeance. Dreadful powers !  
Who on the precipice's side at eve  
Have bid gigantic shadows greyly pass  
Before my mortal vision,—dismal forms

Of a fate-stricken race—I see HIM now,  
Whom ye led follower of your ghastly train—  
O nerve him for his office !

THOAS.

Fearful woman,  
Speak thy command, if thou would have it reach  
A conscious ear; for whilst thou gazest thus,  
My flesh seems hardening into stone; my soul  
Is tainted; thought of horror courses thought  
Like thunder-clouds swept wildly;—yet I feel  
That I must do thy bidding.

ISMENE.

It is well;—  
Hast thou a weapon?

THOAS.

Yes; the generous prince,  
When I resign'd my arms, left me a dagger.

ISMENE.

The prince! The Furies sent it by his hand,  
For justice on his father.

THOAS.

On thy husband?

ISMENE.

Husband! Beware!—my husband moulders yet  
Within his rusting armour; such a word



From thee may pierce the rock beneath whose shade  
He fell, and curse him with a moment's life  
To blast thee where we stand. If this slight king,  
In the caprice of tyranny was pleas'd  
To deck me out in regal robes, dost think  
That in his wayward smiles, or household taunts,  
I can forget the wretchedness and shame  
He hurl'd upon me once ?

THOAS.

What shame ?

ISMENE.

What shame !

Thou hast not heard it. Listen ! I was pluck'd  
From the small pressure of an only babe,  
And in my frenzy, sought the hall where Creon  
Drain'd the frank goblet ; fell upon my knees ;  
Embrac'd his foot-stool with my hungry arms,  
And shriek'd aloud for liberty to seek  
My infant's ashes, or to hear some news  
Of how it perish'd ;—Creon did not deign  
To look upon me, but with reckless haste  
Dash'd me to earth ;—yes ; this disgrace he cast  
On the proud daughter of a line which trac'd  
Its skiey lineage to the gods, and bore  
The impress of its origin,—on me,  
A woman, and a mother !

THOAS.

Let me fly

And whet Athenian anger with thy wrongs—  
My thoughts are strange and slaughterous.

ISMENE.

*[After a pause.*

Fly then! Yes!—

*(Aside.)* 'T will be as certain.—I will point a way  
Will lead thee through a chamber to the terrace,  
Whence thou may'st reach the wall. Thy only peril  
Lies in that chamber. Mark me well;—if there  
An arm be rais'd to stay thee—if a voice  
Be heard—or if aught mortal meet thy sight,  
Whate'er the form, thy knife is pledged to quench  
The life that breathes there.

THOAS.

I obey. Farewell!

*[He takes her hand; she shivers; and drops it.*

ISMENE.

Hold off thy hand—it thrills me.—Swear!

THOAS.

By those

Who hover o'er us now, I swear!

ISMENE.

Be firm.

That is the door;—thou canst not miss the path.  
Is thy steel ready?

THOAS.

Yes;—my breast is cold

As is that steel.

ISMENE.

Haste—the thick darkness wanes.

[*Exit* THOAS.]

Infernal powers! I thank ye—all is paid—

By thousand ectsasies in which my soul

Grows wanton. Calchas!

*Enter* CALCHAS.

Wish me joy, old servant!

What dost thou think of him who left me now?

CALCHAS.

A gallant soldier.

ISMENE.

'Tis my son—my own!

The very child for whom I knelt to Creon,

Is sent to give me justice. He is gone,

Arm'd with a dagger, thro' the royal chamber,

Sworn to strike any that may meet him there

A corpse before him. Dost thou think the king

Will see to-morrow?

CALCHAS.

He may slumber.

ISMENE.

No—

He hath sent his son to exile—he will wake —  
I'm sure he will. There ! listen !—'twas a groan !  
'Twill be but low—again ! 'Tis finish'd ! Shades  
Of my immortal ancestry, look down,  
And own me of your kindred !—Calchas, haste ;  
Secure possession of the towers that guard  
The city gates :—entrust them to our friends,  
Who, when I give the word, will set them wide.  
Haste, 'tis thy final labour. I shall soon  
Be potent to reward the friends who clove  
To me in my sad bondage.

CALCHAS.

Whither go'st thou ?

ISMENE.

To the pale shrine of her whose withering shield  
Is dedicate to Athens. I have pray'd  
At coldest midnight there, without a hope  
Which might give ardour to my freezing veins.  
I ask her to allay my raptures now,  
By touch of marble—I require its chillness.  
There I'll await the issue. It is sure !

[*Exeunt* ISMENE and CALCHAS.]

## SCENE III.

*The Outskirts of a Wood on one side ; the Athenian Camp on the other. A Watch-fire at a little distance, lighting the Scene.*

PENTHEUS (*walking backwards and forwards as a Guard*).

The cold grey dawn begins to glimmer ; speed it,  
Ye powers that favour Athens ! From the sea,  
Her everlasting guardian, Phœbus, rise,  
To pour auspicious radiance o'er the field,  
In which she may efface the foul dishonour  
Her arms own'd yesterday. Not shame alone,  
But loss no morrow can repair, is hers !  
Archas, our army's noble leader, sleeps  
Beneath the pressure of a thousand shields ;  
And Thoas, bravest of our youth, a slave—  
Perchance, ere this a corpse. Friend whom I loved,  
In whose advancing glories I grew proud  
As though they had been mine—if yet thou breathest,  
I will deliver, and if dead, avenge thee !  
O, Thoas !

*Enter THOAS wildly, from the Wood.*

THOAS.

Who pronounc'd that wretched name,—  
That name no honest tongue may utter more ?  
Pentheus !

PENTHEUS.

Thoas ! most welcome. Thou art come in time  
To share a glorious conflict. Ha ! thine eyes  
Glare with a frightful light ;—be calm,—thou art safe ;—  
This is the camp of those who will reward  
Thy great emprise of yesterday, with place  
Among the foremost in the battle. Come  
To my exulting heart. [*Offering to embrace* THOAS.

THOAS.

No !—hold me from thee !—  
My heart can ne'er know fellowship again  
With such as thine ; for I have paid a price  
For this vile liberty to roam abroad,  
And cry to woods and rocks that answer me  
With fearful echoes :—such a price, my Pentheus—  
My own unspotted conscience. Dost not see  
Foul spots of blood upon this slave's apparel,  
Polluting e'en that dress ?

PENTHEUS.

If thou hast struck  
Some soldier down to vindicate thy freedom,  
Who shall accuse thee ?

THOAS.

'Twas no soldier, Pentheus ;  
No stout opponent that my fatal knife  
Dismiss'd to Erebus. A wither'd hand,

As from an old man, in the gloom stretch'd forth,  
Scarce met my touch,—which could not have delay'd  
My course an instant ;—'twas no thought of fear,  
No haste for freedom, urged me,—but an oath  
Glar'd on my soul in characters of flame,  
And madden'd me to strike. I rais'd my arm,  
And wildly hurl'd my dagger ;—nought but air  
It seem'd to meet ;—but a sharp feeble sigh,  
Such as death urges when it stops the gasp  
Of wasting age, assur'd me it had done  
A murderer's office.

PENTHEUS.

Think not of it thus :—  
Thy lips are parch'd,—let me fetch water.

THOAS.

No !

I have drank fiercely at a mountain spring,  
And left the stain of blood in its pure waters ;  
It quench'd my mortal thirst, and I rejoic'd,  
For I seem'd grown to demon, till the stream  
Cool'd my hot throat, and then I laugh'd aloud,  
To find that I had something human still.

PENTHEUS.

Fret not thy noble heart with what is past.

THOAS.

No !—'tis not past !—the murderer has no PAST ;  
But one eternal PRESENT.

HYLLUS.            [*Within the wood.*

Help me !—answer !—

THOAS.

The voice of Hyllus !—of that noble youth,  
Who, for my sake, is outcast from his home,  
So near the camp of Athens ! Should our guards  
Arrest him, he will perish. Friend ! That voice  
Comes on my ear like that of one who serv'd me,  
In yonder city ; leave thy watch to me  
A moment.

PENTHEUS.

No—thy passion's dangerous ;  
I dare not trust it.

THOAS.

See—I have subdu'd  
The pang which wrung me. By our ancient loves  
Grant me this boon—perhaps the last.

PENTHEUS.

Be quick,  
For the watch presently will be remov'd,  
And the trump call to battle.            [*Exit PENTHEUS.*

THOAS.            [*Calling to HYLLUS.*

Here ! The hope  
Of saving Hyllus wafts into my soul  
A breath of comfort.



*Enter* HYLLUS.

HYLLUS.

I have lost my path,  
Wandering the dismal night in this old wood ;  
I'd seek the coast ; canst thou point out the way ?

THOAS.

Avoid it—on each side the Isthmus, ships  
Of Athens ride at anchor.

HYLLUS.                    [*Recognising him.*

Thoas ! free—

Then I am bless'd, and I can bear my lot,  
However hard ;—I guess the hand that op'd  
The dungeon door ;—how didst thou quit the palace ?

THOAS.

Why dost thou ask me that ? Through a large chamber  
That open'd on a terrace—'twas all dark ;—  
Tell me who lay there ?

HYLLUS.

'Tis my father's chamber,

Did he awake ?

THOAS.

Thy father ?—gods ! The king ?  
The feeble old man with the reverend hair ?  
Art sure he rested there ?

HYLLUS.

Sure. No one else  
May enter after sunset, save the queen.

THOAS.

The queen ! all's clear ;—Jove strike me into marble !

HYLLUS.

Why dost thou tremble so ? as if a fit  
Of ague shook thee.

THOAS.

Nothing—only thought  
Of my past danger came upon my soul  
And shook it strangely. Was the old man there ?

*[Stands abstractedly as stupefied.]*

PENTHEUS.

*[Without.]*

Thoas !

THOAS.

Haste !—Do not lose a moment—fly !  
The watch-fire that is waning now is fed  
By hands which, madden'd by the foul defeat  
Of yesterday, will slay thee.

HYLLUS.

Whither fly ?  
The camp of Athens is before me ;—ships  
Of Athens line the coasts,—and Corinth's king

Hath driven me forth an exile. I'll return  
And crave my father's pardon.

THOAS.

No—not there—  
Yet, where should the poor stripling go? O Jove!  
When he shall learn—

HYLLUS.

Farewell—yet hold an instant!—  
Wilt thou not send some message to Creusa,  
That she may greet her brother with a smile?

THOAS.

Creusa smile!—Methinks I see her now—  
Her form expands—her delicate features grow  
To giant stone; her hairs escape their band,  
And stream aloft in air;—and now they take  
The forms of fiery serpents—how they hiss—  
And point their tongues at Thoas!

HYLLUS.

This is frenzy;  
I cannot leave thee thus:—whate'er my fate,  
I will attend and soothe thee.

THOAS.

Soothe me!—Boy,  
Wouldst haunt me with that face which now I see  
Is like thy father's. Ha! ha! ha! Thou soothe me—

Look not upon me; by this lurid light  
Thou look'st a spectre. Hence, or I will rend thee!

HYLLUS.

I rather would die here.

THOAS.

Fool! fool! away!

[*Exit HYLLUS.*]

He's gone—yet *she* is with me still,—with looks  
More terrible than anger;—take away  
That patient face,—I cannot bear its sweetness;—  
Earth, cover me! [*Falls on the ground.*]

*Enter* PENTHEUS.

PENTHEUS.

The troops are arming fast;  
They call on thee to lead them.—Hark, the tramp—  
[*The trumpet sounds.*]

THOAS.

[*Leaps up.*]

Yes; I will answer to its call. Again  
Thou shalt behold me strike. In yonder field  
I'll win that which I hunger for.

PENTHEUS.

A crown

Of laurel which hath floated in thy dreams  
From thy brave infancy—

THOAS.

A grave! a grave! [*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

F

## ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

*The interior of the Funereal Grove at Corinth.*

*The Urn of CREON.*

*CREUSA discovered bending over it.*

CREUSA.

'Tis strange!—I cannot weep for him; I've tried  
To reckon every artifice of love  
Which mid my father's waywardness proclaim'd  
His tenderness unalter'd;—felt again  
The sweet caresses infancy receiv'd,  
And read the prideful look that made them sweeter,  
Have run the old familiar round of things  
Indifferent, on which affection hangs  
In delicate remembrances which make  
Each household custom sacred;—I've recall'd  
From Memory's never-failing book of pain,  
My own neglects of dutiful regard  
Too frequent—all that should provoke a tear—  
And all in vain. My feelings are as dull,  
Mine eyes are rigid as when first they met

The horrid vision of his thin white hairs  
Matted with blood. Gods ! let me know again  
A touch of natural grief, or I shall go  
Distract, and think the bloody form is here.

*Enter* HYLLUS.

Hyllus ! my brother ! thou wilt make me weep,  
For we shall mourn as we were lov'd together.  
Dost thou know all ?

HYLLUS.

Yes, all.—Alas ! Creusa,  
He died in anger with me.

CREUSA.

Do not dwell  
On that sad thought ;—but recollect the cause  
Was noble—the defence of one whose soul  
Claims kindred with thine own.

HYLLUS.

Unhappy sister,  
What sorrow stranger than thy present grief  
Awaits thee yet ! I cannot utter it.

CREUSA.

Speak ;—any words of thine will comfort me.

HYLLUS.

I fear thou must no longer link the thoughts  
Of nobleness and Thoas.

CREUSA.

Then my soul  
Must cease all thinkings ; for I've blended them  
Till they have grown inseparate. What is this ?

HYLLUS.

That he hath made us orphans.

CREUSA.

He is free  
From such ignoble guiltiness as thou.  
What fury shed this thought into a soul  
Once proud to be his debtor ?

HYLLUS.

Poor believer  
In virtue's dazzling counterfeit, 'tis sad  
To undeceive thee. At the break of day  
I met the murderer, frantic from his crime,  
In anguish which explain'd by after proofs  
Attests his guilt.

CREUSA.

And is this all ? Hast said ?  
All thou canst urge against the nobleness  
Which breathes in every word ? Against thy life  
Preserv'd at liberal hazard of his own ?  
Against the love which I was proud to bear

For him, and that with which he more than paid me ?  
He in some frenzy utter'd aimless words,  
And thou at once believ'd him guilty. Go !  
Haste and accuse him. Henceforth we are twain.

HYLLUS.

Sister, I never will accuse him.

CREUSA.

Take

My thanks for that small promise, though our souls,  
While thine is tainted with this foul belief,  
Can ne'er be mingled as they have been. Now  
I see why I was passionless. Ismene  
Bends her steps hither ; thou hadst best retire ;  
She rules the city, for her secret friends  
Cast off their masks, and own themselves the foes  
Of Corinth's prince.

HYLLUS.

Beside my father's urn

I shall await her.

CREUSA.

I will not expose

My anguish to her cold and scornful gaze ;—  
Brother, farewell awhile ; we are divided,  
But I will bless thee.

[*Exit.*



*Enter ISMENE and Guards.*

ISMENE.

Wherefore art thou here,  
Despite the sentence which the king pronounc'd  
Of exile?

HYLLUS.

I have come to mourn a father,  
Whose words of passion had been long unsaid,  
Had his kind heart still throbb'd; and next, to claim  
My heritage.

ISMENE.

Thine!—win it if thou canst——

*Enter CALCHAS.*

How stands the battle?

CALCHAS.

Corinth's soldiers fly,  
Routed in wild disorder. Thoas leads  
The troops of Athens, and will soon appear  
In triumph at our gates.

ISMENE.

Leads, say'st thou?—leads?  
Let Corinth's gates stand open to admit  
The hero,—give him conduct to the hall,  
Where sculptur'd glories of Corinthian kings

Shall circle him who sham'd them,—there, alone,  
I would crave speech with him. *[Exit CALCHAS.]*

HYLLUS. *[To the Soldiers.]*

My countrymen,

Will ye endure this shame? I am a youth  
Unskill'd in war; but I have learn'd to die  
When life is infamy. If ye will join me,  
We'll close the gates with ramparts of the slain.  
Does no heart answer mine?

ISMENE.

Their swords shall curb

Thy idle ravings. Athens triumphs now!—  
Attend him to his chamber, and beware  
He leaves it not.

HYLLUS.

For this I ought to thank thee:

I would not see my country's foul disgrace;  
But thou shalt tremble yet. *[Exit, guarded.]*

ISMENE.

Now shall I clasp him—

Clasp him a victor o'er my country's foes;—  
The slayer of him most hated. Double transport!  
The dream of great revenge I lived upon  
Was never bright with image of such joy,  
And now comes link'd with vengeance! Thoas, haste!

*[Exit.]*

## SCENE II.

*Before the Gates of Corinth.*

*Shouts without.*

*Enter THOAS in armour, with his sword drawn, and  
Athenian Soldiers, as in pursuit.*

THOAS.

Here we may breathe awhile from conquest ; 'twas  
A noble chase, we scarce may call it battle ;  
Success so quick hath followed on success,  
That we shall want more time to count our glories  
Than we have spent in winning them. The foe  
Is niggard, and will not allow our arms  
One day of conflict. We have won too soon.  
Grant me, great gods, instead of years of life,  
Another such an hour !

SOLDIER.

My lord, here's wine ;  
'Tis from the tents of Corinth.

THOAS.

Not a drop.

My heart's too light—too jocund, to allow  
Another touch of ecstasy, deriv'd  
From mortal fruitage ; nay, were it Jove's nectar,  
I'd set the untasted cup of crystal down,  
And wait till all our glorious work were finish'd !

Soldiers! we sup in Corinth! You'll not wait  
Past time of hunger, if ye are not faint  
With rapid conquest.

*Enter PENTHEUS and Soldiers.*

PENTHEUS.

Noble leader, hail!  
Thy country's heroes bless thee with the sense  
Of their delighted wonder! With one voice  
They greet thee as the winner of this fight,  
To which thou led them. Never was a scheme  
Of battle, plann'd in council of the sage,  
Form'd with a skill more exquisite than that  
Which, in the instant thou wert call'd to lead us,  
Flash'd on thy spirit, and in lines of fire  
From thine was manifest to ours! Art wounded?

THOAS.

A very scratch; I blush to think no more:  
Some frolic blood let in the strife had serv'd  
To moderate my fervours.

PENTHEUS.

See; our comrades  
Have snatched a branch from the Corinthian laurels  
(Which now I fear must wither) for a wreath  
To grace thy brow! Soldiers, 'tis much I ask;  
But when I tell ye I have watch'd your chief

From the first flash that dazzled in his eye  
At tale of glory, ye may yield to me  
The proud delight of offering him this honor.

[*Soldier gives the wreath to PENTHEUS, who gives it to*

THOAS.

PENTHEUS.

I thank ye, comrades.

THOAS.

The immortal gods  
Grant me a double blessing in the friend  
From whom I take this happiness. O, Pentheus!  
I have mus'd fondly—proudly—on the fate  
Which waits upon my country; when the brow  
Which thou wouldst deck, was bar'd to mist and storm;  
When every moonlit fountain which displaced  
The blackness of the moss-grown hillock told  
Of the pure beauty which her name should keep,  
Empearling starless ages; when each wave  
That rippled in her harbour to my ear  
Spoke glad submission to the Queen of Cities;  
But never, 'mid my burning hopes for Athens,  
Did I believe that I should stand thus crown'd,  
Her laurell'd soldier! Friends, the sun-light wanes,  
And we must sup in Corinth!

PENTHEUS.

See, the gates

Open to welcome us!

[*The gates open.*

THOAS.

Without a blow ?

We shall not earn our banquet. So expands  
Before the vision of my soul, the east  
To the small cluster of our godlike sons.  
Let Asia break the mirror of our seas  
With thousand sterns of ivory, and cast  
The glare of gold upon them to disturb  
The azure hue of heaven, they shall be swept  
As glittering clouds before the sun-like face  
Of unapplienced virtue ! Friends, forgive me ;  
I have been used to idle thought, nor yet  
Have learn'd to marry it to action. Blest  
To-day in both.

PENTHEUS.

A herald from the city.

*Enter* CALCHAS.

CALCHAS.

I am commission'd by the queen to speak  
With Thoas.

THOAS.

I am here.

*[Trembles, and supports himself, as paralysed, on*

PENTHEUS.

Thou art commission'd  
From the infernal powers to cross my path

Of glorious triumph, with a shape that brings  
Before me terrible remembrance, which  
Had strangely vanish'd from me.

PENTHEUS.

[*To the Soldiers.*

He is ill,—

Retire.

THOAS.

No—should the herald fade in air  
He would not leave his office unfulfill'd,  
One look hath smit my soul.

PENTHEUS.

Is this a dream?

THOAS.

No—'tis a dreadful waking—I have dreamt  
Of honour, and have struggled in my dream  
For Athens, as if I deserved to fight  
Unsullied in her cause. The joy of battle  
In eddies as a whirlpool had engulf'd  
The thought of one sad moment, when my soul  
Was blasted; but it rises in the calm,  
Like to a slaughter'd seaman, who pursues  
The murderous vessel which swept proudly on,  
When his death-gurge ended. Hence, vain wreath!—  
Thou wouldst entwine my brow with serpent coldness,  
And wither instant there. [*Tears the wreath.*

So vanish all  
My hopes; they are gone—I'm fit to answer thee  
Who sent thee here? [To CALCHAS.

CALCHAS.  
The queen.

THOAS.  
A worthy mistress  
Of such a slave— thy errand?

CALCHAS.  
She who rules  
In Corinth now, admits the victor's power,  
And bids the gates thus open: she requires  
A conference with Thoas in the hall  
Next to the royal chamber—thou hast been  
There, as I think, my lord.

THOAS.  
I know full well,  
Lead, dreadful herald, on.

PENTHEUS.  
The troops attend  
The order of their general.

THOAS. [To CALCHAS.  
Why dost wait?  
Thou see'st that I obey thy call.



PENTHEUS.

My friend,  
Thy blood is fever'd—thou may'st choose thy time—  
Postpone this meeting.

THOAS.

[To CALCHAS.]

Why dost tarry? turn  
Thy face away—it maddens me—go on!

[Exit after CALCHAS.]

SOLDIER.

[To PENTHEUS.]

My lord, we wait for orders; this strange man,  
Half warrior and half rhapsodist, may bring  
Our army into peril.

PENTHEUS.

Fear it not;

He has all elements of greatness in him,  
Although as yet not perfectly commingled,  
Which is sole privilege of gods. They cast  
Such piteous weakness on the noblest men  
That we may feel them mortal. 'Tis a cloud  
Which speedily will pass, and thou shalt see  
The hero shine as clearly forth in council  
As he has done in victory. Meanwhile  
He leaves us pleasant duty—form your lines—  
Sound trumpets—march triumphant into Corinth!

[The Athenians enter Corinth.]

## SCENE III.

*The Hall of Statues in the Palace, same as in Third Act.*

THOAS.

[*Alone.*

Again I stand within this awful hall ;  
I found the entrance here, without the sense  
Of vision ; for a foul and clinging mist,  
Like the damp vapour of a long-closed vault,  
Is round me. Now its objects start to sight  
With terrible distinctness ! Crimson stains  
Break sudden on the walls ! The fretted roof  
Grows living ! Let me hear a human voice,  
Or I shall play the madman !

*Enter ISMENE, richly dressed.*

ISMENE.

Noble soldier,  
I bid thee welcome, with the rapturous heart  
Of one, for whom thy patriot arm hath wrought  
Deliverance and revenge—but more for Athens  
Than for myself, I hail thee : why dost droop ?  
Art thou oppressed with honours, as a weight  
Thou wert not born to carry ? I will tell  
That which shall show thee native to the load,

And will requite thee with a joy as great  
As that thou hast conferr'd. Thy life was hid  
Beneath inglorious accident, till force  
Of its strong current urged it forth to day,  
To glisten and expand in sun-light. Know  
That it has issu'd from a fountain great  
As is its destiny.—Thou sharest with me  
The blood of Theseus.

THOAS.

If thy speech is true,  
And I have something in me which responds  
To its high tidings, I am doom'd to bear  
A heavier woe than I believ'd the gods  
Would ever lay on mortal; I have stood  
Unwittingly upon a skiey height,  
By ponderous gloom encircled,—thou hast shown  
The mountain-summit mournfully revers'd  
In the black mirror of a lurid lake,  
Whose waters soon shall cover me,—I've stain'd  
A freeman's nature; thou hast shown it sprung  
From gods and heroes, and wouldst have me proud  
Of the foul sacrilege.

ISMENE.

If that just deed,  
Which thus disturbs thy fancy, were a crime,  
What is it in the range of glorious acts,  
Past and to come, to which thou art allied,

But a faint speck, an atom, which no eye  
But thine would dwell on ?

THOAS.

It infests them all,  
Spreads out funereal blackness as they pass  
In sad review before me. Hadst thou pour'd  
This greatness on my unpolluted heart,  
How had it bounded ! now it tortures me,  
From thee, fell sorceress, who snar'd my soul  
Here—in this very hall !—May the strong curse  
Which breathes from out the ruins of a nature  
Blasted by guilt—

ISMENE.

Hold ! Parricide—forbear !  
She whom thou hast aveng'd, she whom the death  
Of Creon hath set free, whom thou wouldst curse,  
Is she who bore thee !

THOAS.

Thou !

ISMENE.

Dost doubt my word ?  
Is there no witness in thy mantling blood  
Which tells thee whence 'twas drawn ? Is nature silent ?  
If, from the mists of infancy, no form  
Of her who, sunk in poverty, forgot  
Its ills in tending thee, and made the hopes

G

Which glimmer'd in thy smiles her comfort,—gleams  
Upon thee yet ;—hast thou forgot the night  
When foragers from Corinth toss'd a brand  
Upon the roof that shelter'd thee ; dragg'd out  
The mother from the hearth-stone where she sat,  
Resign'd to perish, shrieking for the babe  
Whom from her bosom they had rent ? That child  
Now listens. As in rapid flight, I gazed  
Backward upon the blazing ruin, shapes  
Of furies, from amid the fire, look'd out  
And grinn'd upon me. Every weary night  
While I have lain upon my wretched bed,  
They have been with me, pointing to the hour  
Of vengeance. Thou hast wrought it for me, son !  
Embrace thy mother.

THOAS.

Would the solid earth  
Would open, and enfold me in its strong  
And stifling grasp, that I might be as though  
I ne'er was born.

ISMENE.

Dost mock me ? I have clasp'd  
Sorrow and shame as if they were my sons,  
To keep my heart from hardening into stone ;  
The promis'd hour arriv'd ; and when it came,  
The furies, in repayment, sent an arm,

Moulded from mine, to strike the oppressor dead.  
I triumph'd,—and I sent thee!

THOAS.

Dost confess  
That, conscious who I was, thou urg'd my knife  
Against the king?

ISMENE.

Confess!—I glory in it!—  
Thy arm hath done the purpose of my will;  
For which I bless it. Now I am thy suitor.  
Victorious hero! Pay me for those cares  
Long past, which man ne'er guesses at;—for years  
Of daily, silent suffering, which young soldiers  
Have not a word to body forth; for all,—  
By filling for a moment these fond arms,  
Which held thee first.

THOAS.      [*Shrinking from her.*

I cannot. I will kneel,  
To thank thee for thy love, ere thou didst kill  
Honour and hope;—then grovel at thy feet,  
And pray thee trample out the wretched life  
Thou gav'st me.

ISMENE.

Ha! Beware, unfeeling man:—  
I had oppos'd, had crush'd all human loves,  
And they were wither'd; thou hast call'd them forth,

Rushing in crowds from memory's thousand cells,  
To scoff at them. Beware! They will not slumber,  
But sting like scorpions.

*Enter IPHITUS.*

Wherefore dost intrude  
On this high conference?

IPHITUS.

The people cry  
That solemn inquisition should be held  
For Creon's blood;—else do they fear the gods  
Will visit it on them.

ISMENE.

They need not fear.  
It will be well aveng'd.

IPHITUS.

To thee, Ismene,  
That which I next must speak, is of dear import;—  
Wilt hear it in this noble stranger's presence?

ISMENE.

Say on, old man.

IPHITUS.

From the old crumbling altar,  
Just as the gates were open'd, breath'd a voice  
In whisper low, yet heard through each recess  
Of Jove's vast temple, bidding us to seek

Of thee, Ismene, who the murderer is,  
And summon thee to the same fearful spot,  
To speak it there.

ISMENE.

[To THOAS.

Athenian ! dost thou hear ?

THOAS.

I hear.

IPHITUS.

The hostile nations lay aside  
Their quarrel, till this justice to the dead  
Is render'd. Chiefs of each will guard the fane,  
And wait the solemn issue.—In their name,  
And in the mightier name of him whose shrine  
Hath burst long silence, I command thee, queen,  
Thou presently be there.

ISMENE.

I shall obey—

Beside the altar place the regal seat ;  
And there, in state befitting Corinth's queen,  
I'll take my place.

[To THOAS.

Farewell ! *Thou* wilt be there !

THOAS.

Be sure I will not fail.

ISMENE.

'Tis well ! 'Tis well !

[Exit.



IPHITUS.

Thou saidst thou shouldst attend ?

THOAS.

I shall. What more  
Would'st thou have with me ?

IPHITUS.

I would ask a band  
Of the most noble of Athenian youth,  
To witness this procedure ; and to lend  
Their conduct, should the murderer stand reveal'd,  
To keep the course of justice unassail'd,  
And line the path of death.

THOAS.

All that can make  
The wretch accurs'd, shall wait him. Let me breathe  
Alone a moment. [Exit IPHITUS.]

How they'll start to see  
The guilty one descend the solemn steps,  
And hang their heads for shame, and turn their eyes  
In mercy from him. [Going.]

*Enter CREUSA.*

CREUSA.

For a moment hear me—  
I would not break on thy triumphant hours,  
But for my brother's sake. Do not refuse,

For, if he wrong'd thee by a frantic thought,  
There was one ready to defend thy honour  
From slightest taint !

THOAS.

What taint ? the breath of infamy  
Spreads o'er my name already !

CREUSA.

Do not ask—

'Twas a wild thought ;—but there are tongues which make  
As false a charge ; tongues which have power to crush  
The guiltless !—They have murmur'd that this crime  
Is that of Hyllus !

THOAS.

Hyllus the unsullied !

CREUSA.

I knew that thou would'st say so—that no force  
Of circumstance would weigh in thy pure thought  
Against the beauty of his life. They found him  
Just after day-break, suddenly return'd  
From exile, in the chamber of the king,  
Gazing with bloodless aspect on a sight  
Of bloodshed ;—yet thou dost not think 'twas he  
That with a craven hand—

THOAS.

O no !

CREUSA.

And thou  
Wilt plead his cause—wilt save him from the fate  
That threatens his young life?

THOAS.

My own shall first  
Be quench'd!

CREUSA.

The gods repay thee for the word!  
O brother, brother! could'st thou wrong this heart  
With one suspicion? Why dost turn away,  
And shrink and shudder in the warrior's dress,  
As when I thank'd thee for that brother's life,  
At the slave's vest which then, in thy proud thought,  
Debas'd the wearer?

THOAS.

O, I thought so then!  
Now I would give the treasures of the deep,  
Nay more—the hope of glory—to resume  
Those servile garments with the spotless thoughts  
Of yesterday.

*Enter Messenger.*

MESSENGER.

My general, Pentheus, asks  
If, by thy sanction, Iphitus requires  
His presence in the temple?

THOAS.

Pentheus?—Yes.

CREUSA.        [THOAS *turns away*.

Why in the temple? wilt not speak?

MESSENGER.

The priest

There summons all to some high trial.

CREUSA.

I see it!—

They meet to judge my brother. I will fly—

THOAS.

Thou must not, lady—in that fearful place,  
Horrors unguess'd at by thy gentle nature  
Will freeze thy youthful blood, that thou shalt pass  
No happy moment more.

CREUSA.

And what have I

To do with happiness? I am not young,  
For I grew old in moments charg'd with love  
And anguish. Now I feel that I could point  
The murderer out with dreadful skill—could mark  
The livid paleness, read the shrinking eye,  
Detect the empty grasping of the hand  
Renewing fancied slaughter;—why dost turn  
Thus coldly from me?—Ah! thou hast forgot

The vows which, when in slavery, thou offer'd.  
And I was proud to answer—if not, Thoas,  
Once press my hand ; O gods ! he lets it fall !—  
So withers my last hope—so my poor heart  
Is broken.

[*Faints.*]

THOAS.

[*To Messenger.*]

Take her gently in. [*Messenger supports her out.*]

THOAS.

One glance. [*Looks at her and shudders.*]

O that the beauty I have lov'd and worshipp'd  
Should be a thing to shiver me !—'Tis just.

[*Exit.*]

END OF ACT IV.

## ACT V.

## SCENE I.

*The Interior of the Temple of Jupiter the Avenger—ISMENE seated in the midst, in a Chair of State—Corinthians on the right, and Athenians on the left, side of the Temple—At the extremity on the right side, HYLLUS standing—At the extremity of the left, THOAS seated.*

IPHITUS.

Corinthians and Athenians ! late opposed  
In mortal conflict, dedicated now  
To solemn work of Justice, hear the will  
Of the Avenging Power, beneath whose roof  
Ye stand thus marshall'd. Royal blood hath stain'd  
A palace floor ;—not shed in blazing war,  
But in night's peace ; not some hot soldier's blood,  
But the thin current of a frame made sacred  
To Orcus' gentlest arrow. Heaven requires  
Both nations to unite in dealing death  
Upon the slayer, who, unslain, will draw  
Its withering curse on both. In yonder shrine  
Which dim tradition's fearful whispers made

A terror to my infancy, a voice,  
Which breath'd fell murmurs to ancestral ears,  
Breaks centuries of silence to pronounce  
The Queen as gifted to direct the shaft  
To the curs'd head ;—and every sign around us  
By which the world invisible, when charg'd  
With bloody secret, struggles to subdue  
Things visible to organs which may send  
Its meaning to the startled soul, attest  
The duty I assume.—Ismene !

ISMENE.

Priest

Of Jove, I am attendant to thy summons ;—  
What is thy wish ?

IPHITUS.

Sad widow of a king  
Whose feeble life some cruel hand hath stopp'd,  
I do adjure thee, by these hoary hairs,  
That chang'd their hue from raven whilst thou shar'd  
His mansion ;—by celestial powers, who watch  
Our firmness now ;—and by those fearful gods,  
Whom 'tis unblest to mention, lay aside  
All terror, all affection, all remorse,—  
If cause of penitence thou hast, to rend  
The veil of darkness which the murderer wears,  
And give him to his destiny. Begin

The solemn strain which shall attune our souls  
To hearken and to execute !

[*Solemn music.*

IPHITUS.

Ismene,

Speak : Dost thou know the slayer ?

ISMENE.

Yes !

IPHITUS.

Dost thou

Behold him now ?

ISMENE. [*Looking wildly round.*

I do not see the faces

Or know the names of all. Who is the man  
That at the right side of the circle stands ?

IPHITUS.

The youth with head erect and cloudless brow ?  
That is the orphan'd Hyllus.

ISMENE.

Who is he

That sits upon the the other side, apart,  
With face averted ?

[*THOAS turns his head suddenly, and looks upon her.*

I behold him now.

It is a dreadful duty you exact  
From me—a woman. If I speak the name,  
What sentence follows ?



IPHITUS.

Death !

ISMENE.

And soon performed ?

IPHITUS.

The Fates require that he thou shalt denounce  
As guilty, must be led in silence hence,  
And none behold him after, save his slayers.  
Attend once more ! Thou hast declared thou know'st  
The guilty one ! I ask thee—is he here ?

ISMENE.

O Gods ! He is.

IPHITUS.

Name him !

CALCHAS.

She shudders ! See,—

I think she cannot speak !

IPHITUS.

If quivering tongue

Refuse its office, point the victim out.

[ISMENE rises ; turns towards THOAS, who rises, and  
confronts her ; she trembles, pauses, and resumes her seat.

IPHITUS.

Thou hast confess'd the guilty one is here ;  
Where stands he ?

[ISMENE rises ; points to HYLLUS, shrieks " There ! " and  
falls back senseless in her chair.

THOAS.

'Tis false !

[CREUSA *rushes forward and embraces* HYLLUS.

CREUSA.

Most false ! O murderess !

Protect him, noble Thoas !

HYLLUS.

Peace, my sister :—

Implore no mortal aid ; let us be patient,

And suffer calmly what the gods decree.

My life may satisfy.

IPHITUS.

It cannot be !

Hold—stir not—breathe not—from that shrine the voice

Of heaven will answer hers. Do ye not hear ? [A pause.

Hark !—It is voiceless, and the youth is doom'd.

THOAS.

Forbear, ye murderous judges ;—look upon him !

See on his forehead Nature's glorious seal

Of innocence, outspeaking thousand voices,

Which shining in the presence of the gods

Still shows him guiltless.

IPHITUS.

Prove it.

THOAS.

With my life-blood !

O could ye place me in some dizzy cleft

Of inmost Thracian hills, when ribb'd with ice,  
To hear from every rocky shelf a howl  
Of wolves arous'd to famine,—I would stand—  
Calm,—O far calmer than I stand,—to wait  
Their fangs, and let my tortur'd sinews' strength  
Attest his cause ;—'twere nothing—'twere no pain—  
To what the spirit feels. Thou talk'st of curses :  
Beware ! There is no curse with such a power  
As that of guiltless blood pour'd out by mortals  
In the mock'd name of justice.

HYLLUS.

[To THOAS, *aside*.

Thou wilt tell  
Thy secret ;—keep it. Leave me to my doom.

THOAS.

Never ! Corinthians, hear me——

ISMENE.

[*Recovering*.

What is this ?  
Why waits the parricide still there ? Who dares  
Dispute my sentence ?

THOAS.

I !

ISMENE.

Be silent. She  
Who most in all the world should have command  
O'er thee, requires thy silence.

PENTHEUS. [*Stepping forward from  
the Athenian rank.*

By what right  
Dost thou—Queen of the vanquish'd—dare command  
The leader of the conquerors?

ISMENE.

By a mother's.

[*THOAS sinks into his seat—ISMENE descends and  
stands beside him.*

ISMENE.

Athenians—victors!—'tis your fitting name,  
By which I joy to greet you. Ye behold  
One whom ye left to suffer, but who boasts  
Your noblest blood. See! I command my son  
To quit this roof, and leave me to the work  
The gods have destined for me.

THOAS.

Stand aside!

I have a suit I would prefer alone,  
Which may save guilt and sorrow.

IPHITUS.

[*To HYLLUS.*

Lean on me.

*To* THOAS.] Be brief.

HYLLUS.

I have no need; yet I will take  
This thy last kindness; for I can accept it  
Without a blush or shudder.

H

[*All retire, leaving THOAS and ISMENE in front.*]

THOAS.

Why hast heap'd

Foul crime on crime ?

ISMENE.

Son ! there has been no crime

Except for thee. The love that thou hast scorn'd

From the heart's long-closed shrine, outwhisper'd fate,

And saved thee.

THOAS.

Saved me ! Thou mayest save me yet ;

Recall thy sentence. Give me truth and death !

ISMENE.

And own my falsehood ? No ! Let us go hence

Together.

THOAS.

And permit this youth to die !

O that some god would mirror to my soul

Our mortal passage, while the arid sand

We pace ; the yellow, sunless, sky above us ;

And forms distort with anguish, which shall meet

Each vain attempt to be alone, enclose

The conscious blasters of the earth, till forced

To gaze upon each other, we behold,

As in eternal registry, the curse

Writ in the face of each ! No ; let us pray

For torture and for peace !

ISMENE.

If thou remain,  
And risk dishonour to our house and me,  
The poisonous cave below shall be my home,  
And shelter me for ever !

THOAS.

Thou art brave,  
As fits a matron of heroic line ;  
Be great in penitence, and we shall meet  
Absolv'd, where I may join my hand to thine,  
And walk in duteous silence by thy side.

ISMENE.

And couldst thou love me then ?

THOAS.

Love thee ! My mother,  
When thou didst speak that word, the gloom of years  
Was parted,—and I knew again the face  
Which linger'd o'er my infancy,—so pale,  
So proud, so beautiful ! I kneel again,  
A child, and plead to that unhardened heart,  
By all the long past hours of priceless love,  
To let my gushing soul pass forth in grace,  
And bless thee in its parting !

ISMENE.

Never !

THOAS.

[*Rising.*

Yes !

Haste ere the roof shall fall, and crush the germ  
Of sweet repentance in us ; take thy seat,  
And speak as thy heart dictates—

[*Drawing ISMENE towards her seat.*

Hear again !

ISMENE.

Unhand me—rebel son ! Assembled Chiefs,  
Ye called me—I have spoken once—I speak  
No more ; make way there !—I must pass alone !

[*Exit ISMENE.*

THOAS.

[*Calling to ISMENE.*

O ! mother, stay ! She's gone.

[*Sinks into his chair.*

IPHITUS.

Her word decides,  
Unless the gods disown it. Peace ! the altar  
Is silent ; the last moment presses on us—  
Hyllus, the doom'd, stand forth !

CREUSA.

O pause ; to thee.  
Thoas, I call ; thou know'st him guiltless.

IPHITUS.

Hold !

No mortal passion can have utterance here,  
When Fate is audible. To yield is ours ;  
Be calm as Hyllus, or forego his hand.

[CREUSA *sinks on her knees beside HYLLUS; IPHITUS lays one hand on the head of HYLLUS, and raises the other towards heaven.*

IPHITUS.

Dread Power, that bade us to this fane, accept  
The expiation that we offer now,  
And let this blood poured forth atone.

[THOAS *suddenly falls from his seat to the ground.*

CREUSA *rushes to him, and all surround him.*

CREUSA.

Gods! what is this new horror?

[*Opening the vest of THOAS, the dagger falls from it.*

THOAS.

There! 'Tis done!

'Tis well accomplish'd.

CREUSA.

Hyllus, go!

Brother, no more—for thee he perishes.

THOAS.

I will not purchase a last taste of sweetness  
By such estrangement. That steel bears the blood  
Of Creon and his slayer;—how excus'd  
I leave you, generous king, to witness for me.



*Enter CALCHAS.*

CALCHAS.

The queen !

THOAS.

Hold life a moment—what of her?

CALCHAS.

She rush'd,

With looks none dared to question, to the cave ;  
Paused at its horrid portal ; toss'd her arms  
Wildly abroad ; then drew them to her breast,  
As if she clasp'd a vision'd infant there ;  
And as her eye, uplifted to the crag,  
Met those who might prevent her course, withdrew  
Her backward step amidst the deadly clouds  
Which veil'd her—till the spectral shape was lost,  
Where none dare ever tread to seek for that  
Which was Ismene.

THOAS.

Peace be with her ! Pentheus,  
Thy hand ;—let Hyllus reign in honour here ;—  
Convey me to the city of my love ;  
Her future years of glory stream more clear  
Than ever on my soul. O Athens ! Athens !

[Dies.]

HYLLUS.

Sister !

CREUSA.

Forgive me, brother.

[Falls on the neck of Hyllus.]

HYLLUS.

Weep there; 'tis thy home.

Fate, that has smitten us so young, leaves this—

That we shall cleave together to the grave.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

THE END.

**BRADBURY AND EVANS,  
PRINTERS-EXTRAORDINARY TO THE QUEEN,  
WHITEFRIARS.**



**14 DAY USE**  
**RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED**

**LOAN DEPT.**

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or  
on the date to which renewed.

Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

DEC 13 '67	
RECEIVED	
DEC 5 '67 -2 M	
LOAN DEPT.	

LD 21A-60m-2, '67  
(H241s10) 476B

General Library  
University of California  
Berkeley







YC 102070





